

Steve Greenberg's Handout

Week 14, April 29, 2026 Genesis 17 Abram's Name Change, Sign Circumcision

Genesis 17:1-8 Abram Is Named Abraham (Exo 12:43-13:2)

Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD (Hebrew: YHWH, Yahweh) "appeared" to Abram) and said to him, "I am Almighty God walk (continually before Me, Abram) before Me (knowing that you are in My presence) and be Blameless.

The Lord appears to Abram and announces that he will establish an everlasting covenant with Abram and his seed, offspring. Abram will become the father of many nations. The sign of the covenant is circumcision. The covenant will be established with Isaac.

appeared" to Abram: This means God made Himself known to Abram in a direct, experiential way—sometimes like a vision, sometimes like a real visitor—so that Abram could clearly hear and respond to Him.

God initiated contact (Abram didn't summon Him)

The encounter was clear and authoritative

It often involved a promise, covenant, or instruction

It could be visible, audible, or both.

It can be a tangible manifestation of God, sometimes called a theophany (appearance of God), or in Christian theology, even a possible pre-incarnate appearance of Christ.

Other Examples

Gen 12:7 Then the LORD "appeared" to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Gen 18:1 Then the LORD "appeared" to him (Abraham) by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

The LORD appeared to Abram (possible another appearance of God in the person of Jesus, similar to Gen 16 with Hagar)

Blameless (having integrity, obeying, perfect; literally complete, whole. God wanted a total commitment from Abram).

Abram Age ninety-nine years old (Gen 12 Abram was 75yrs old; Gen 16:15 Abram was 86 yrs old; thirteen years later God speaks, now 99 yrs old, Gen 17:1)

God Almighty (Heb El Shaddai; God is the All-Sufficient One; He gives life; He nurtures; He pours out His blessings).

Gen 17:2 And I will make (**confirm, literally give**) My covenant (**everlasting promise**) between Me and you, and will multiply you, exceedingly (**greatly increase your descendants**)."

Gen 15:18 On the same day the LORD made a covenant (unconditional covenant) with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—

Gen 18:18 "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Gen 17:3 Then Abram fell on his face (**worshipping God**), and God talked (**spoke**) with him(**Abram**), saying:

This seems to speak to a direct, personal appearance of God, Abram fell on his face, showing submission, worship and giving honor to God.

Gen 17:4 As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and (**as a result of My covenant**) you shall be a father of many nations (**a multitude of nations**).

Rom 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

Rom 4:12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those (**Jewish believers**) who are of the law, but also to those (**Gentile believers**) who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father (**Spiritual father**) of us all

Rom 4:17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

Gen 17:5 No longer shall your name be called Abram (**which means exalted father**), but your name shall be Abraham (**which means father of a multitude**); for I have made you a father of many nations.

God promises a wonderful new name to everyone, who is an overcomer

Rev 2:17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." '

Gen 17:6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come (**descend**) from you (**This prophecy and promise has been literally fulfilled countless times--example, by all of the kings of Israel and Judah, Mat 1:6 and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon (King) by her, who had been the wife of Uriah.**).

Gen 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.

Gen 35:10 And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel.

Gen 35:11 Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.

Gen 35:12 "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants, after you, I give this land."

Mat 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.

Gen 17:7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you, in their (**or throughout their**) generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants (**seed, offspring**) after you.

Gal 3:17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.

Gal 3:18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise

Rom 9:8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh (**Abraham's natural descendants**), these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed (**Abraham's true descendants**)

Hebrew descendants, seed or offspring; also in 17:7a-b, 8, 9, 10, and 19.

Gen 17:8 Also I give to you and your descendants after you, the land in which you are (now) a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession (permanent property); and I will be their God."

God promised the covenant to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3 that it, would be passed on to his descendants, those who were not yet born.

Genesis 17:9-14 The Sign of the Covenant

Gen 17:9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you (**your part**), you shall keep (**your requirement, is to be faithful and obey**) My covenant, you and your descendants (**seed, offspring**) after you, throughout their generations (**you and your descendants have this continual responsibility**).

Exo 19:3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

Exo 19:5 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

Gen 17:10 This is (**the sign of**) My covenant which you shall keep (**obey faithfully**), between Me and you and your descendants (**seed, offspring**) after you: Every male child among you, shall be circumcised;

Stephen addresses the OT Scriptures, full of faith and power,

Act 7:5 "And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him (**a child, and land**) for a possession, and to his descendants after him. (**The inheritance was real—but still future**).

Act 7:8 "Then He(**God**) gave him(**Abraham**) the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

Gen 17:11 and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins (**cutting off the foreskin**), and it shall be a sign (**mark, not normally visible to others**) of the covenant, between Me and you.

Apostle Paul connected the ideas of circumcision and Christian baptism. The idea is that in Jesus we are spiritually circumcised, as we were also buried with Jesus in baptism.

Col 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

Col 2:12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Col 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Rom 9:8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh (**Abraham's natural descendants**), these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed (**Abraham's true descendants**)

Gen 17:12 He (**every child**) who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations (**from generation to generation**), he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner, who is not your descendant (**seed, offspring**) (**This applies not only to members of your family bloodline, but also to the servants born in your household, and those foreign-born servants whom you have acquired**).

This is according to scripture and ensures that the covenant extends to the next generation, all newborn male children are to be circumcised eight days after they are born.

Lev 12:3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised (**cut off**).

Gen 17:13 He who is born in your house, and he who is bought with your money, must be circumcised, and (**the sign of**) My covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant (**a visible mark and permanent reminder**).

Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people (**covenant family**); he has broken My covenant (**failure to carry out my requirement and broken my covenant**)

Circumcision distinguished those who obeyed God's promises in Abraham's time and later and those who did not.

What does the New Testament say on circumcision?

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

Rom 2:29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

1Cor 7:18 Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

1Cor 7:19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

1Cor 7:20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Gal 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Quote from David Guzik on Blue letter bible Website

i. Unfortunately, through the centuries, the Jews began to trust more in the sign of the covenant (circumcision) than in the God of the covenant, believing that circumcision by itself was sufficient and necessary to save. Paul refutes this idea extensively, especially in light of the finished work of Jesus (Galatians 5:1-15).

ii. Therefore, Christians are free to either circumcise or not. One may do so for social or hygienic reasons, but it doesn't get us any closer to God: *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love* ([Galatians 5:6](#)).

iii. Again, Paul spoke of circumcision and baptism in [Colossians 2:11-12](#), connecting them without saying they are the same thing. In this sense, at least, they are connected: circumcision did not save a Jewish man, but refusing to be circumcised meant disobedience to the covenant, and perhaps rejection of it. In the same sense, being baptized does not save us, but no Christian should refuse baptism.

Genesis 17:15-22 Sarai Is Named Sarah

Gen 17:15 Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai (**my princess**), but Sarah (**princess, Sarah indicates a higher standing and status than Sarai**) shall be her name.

The difference in the names can perhaps be seen in a comment made by the rabbis: "At first she became a princess to her own people, but later she became a princess to the entire world" (as quoted from the Talmud, from AMP footnotes).

Gen 17:16 "And I will bless her (**Sarah**), and also give you (**Abraham**), a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be (**or become**) a mother of nations; kings of peoples (**countries**) shall be, from her (**descendants, seed, offspring**)."

Gen 18:10 And He(**the LORD**) said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

Gen 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing (**God would bless through doing the miraculous**).

Gen 35:11 Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you (Jacob now Israel), and kings shall come from your body.

Gen 35:12 "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants, after you, I give this land."

Gen 17:17 Then Abraham fell (**or bowed down**) on his face and laughed, and said in his heart (**to himself**), "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

Gen 18:12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord (**my Husband**) being old also?"

Gen 21:5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Gen 21:6 And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me."

Gen 21:7 She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."

Paul by inspiration of the Spirit wonderfully described Abraham's faith

Rom 4:16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

Rom 4:17 (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed--God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did;

Rom 4:18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

Rom 4:19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Rom 4:20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,

Rom 4:21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Gen 17:18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael (**my firstborn, from the Egyptian Hagar**) might live before You (**with your special blessing**)!"

Like us, Abraham found it hard to trust God for more than what he could understand, natural wisdom, but he grew more and more in understanding the God does the impossible.

Gen 17:19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear (**give birth to**) you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac (**meaning laughter**); I will establish My covenant with him(**Isaac**) for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants (**seed, offspring**) after him.

Gal 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

Gal 4:29 But, as he(**Ishmael**) who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him (**Isaac**) who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

This line will eventually lead to Jesus Christ, through whom God's blessing continues to all nations, even on to the end.

Gen 17:20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him(**Ishmael**) exceedingly (**through his descendants, and offspring**). He(**Ishmael**) shall beget (**be the father of**) twelve princes (**chieftains, tribal leaders**), and I will make him(**Ishmael, through his descendants**) a great nation.

God blesses Ishmael even though a work of the flesh with a promise that he will become a great nation even though God favors the yet-to-be-born promised Isaac.

Hagar gets a blessing from the Lord

Gen 16:9 The Angel of the LORD said to her (**Hagar**), "Return to your mistress (**Sarah**), and submit yourself under her hand."

Gen 16:10 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her(**Hagar**), "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude."

Gen 16:11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction.

Gen 16:12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

Gen 17:21 "But My covenant (**My solemn pledge**), I will establish (**confirm**) with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear (**a child**) to you at this set time, next year."

Gen 26:1 There was a famine in the land, besides (**just like**) the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.

Gen 26:2 Then the LORD "appeared" to him (**Isaac**) and said: "Do not go down to Egypt, live in the land of which I shall tell you.

Gen 26:3 "Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

Gen 26:4 "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

Gen 26:5 "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

Gen 26:6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar (**the future Promised Land**).

Sarah bore a child at the set time, God said

Gen 21:2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Gen 21:3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him--whom Sarah bore to him--Isaac.

Gen 21:4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Gen 21:5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Gen 17:22 Then He(**God**) finished talking with him(**Abraham**), and God went up from, (**left**) Abraham.

Genesis 17:23-27 Abraham Circumcised Every Male Within His Household

Gen 17:23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house, and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins, that very same day, as God had said (**spoken**) to him(**Abraham**).

Gen 17:24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen 17:25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Gen 17:26 That very same day (**both**) Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael;

Gen 17:27 and all the men of his house (**family & servants**), born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised (**along**) with him(**Abraham**) (**as the sign of obeying God's covenant**).

What we really believe will show up in our actions?

End: